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KT photo | **Tim Bath**

House of Burgess: Debates before Super Tuesday

Fiorina, Christie, Gilmore, Bush out

By Rob Burgess
Tribune columnist

Donald Trump and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton were set to run up their delegate leads on Super Tuesday, with Alabama, Alaska Republicans, American Samoa Democrats, Arkansas, Colorado Democrats, Georgia, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont and Virginia all holding primaries or caucuses.

The deluge continues Saturday with Kansas, Kentucky Republicans, Louisiana, Maine Republicans and Nebraska Democrats. Sunday is the Maine Democratic Caucuses and the Puerto Rico Primaries. And Tuesday, it's Hawaii Republicans, Idaho Republicans, Michigan, Mississippi and Democrats abroad.

Debate-wise, Fox News is set to host the Republicans in Detroit Thursday, and CNN will host the Democrats in Flint, Michigan, Sunday.

Democrats

After losing New Hampshire decisively Feb. 9, Clinton barely won Nevada Feb. 20, and won South Carolina in a walk Saturday. Hosted Feb. 11 by PBS' Gwen Ifill and Judy Woodruff, Clinton and Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders faced off at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Sanders defended single-payer health care. Clinton, despite all evidence, said they both share the same goal. This triangulation is vintage Clinton. Sanders had a pro path-to-citizenship platform and would use executive orders. Clinton defended her congressional record. Sanders was most comfortable on familiar anti-Wall Street ground, not foreign policy.

Winners: Both.

Highlight: Sanders: "[Clinton] talked about getting ... the mentoring of Henry Kissinger. ... I happen to believe that Henry Kissinger was one of the

most destructive secretaries of state in the modern history of this country. I am proud to say that Henry Kissinger is not my friend."

GOP, Feb. 13

Days after dismal showings in the Feb. 9 New Hampshire primary (which Trump won), former Hewlett-Packard CEO Carly Fiorina, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie and former Virginia Gov. Jim Gilmore dropped out.

Hosted Feb. 13 by CBS News' John Dickerson, Major Garrett and Kimberley Strassel, Trump, Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, Dr. Ben Carson and Ohio Gov. John Kasich squared off at the Peace Center in Greenville, South Carolina.

The night began with a moment of silence for departed Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia. Trump said Republicans should "delay, delay, delay" any nominee to succeed Scalia. Carson joked about not being called on, never a good sign. Trump said the boos from the audience were from "Jeb's lobbyists." Kasich said they were handing the election to Clinton by infighting.

Winners: Trump, Rubio, Cruz.

Losers: Carson, Kasich, Bush.

Highlight: Rubio: "I don't know how [Cruz] knows what I said on Univision because he doesn't speak Spanish."

Cruz: “Marco, si quiere, díselo ahora, ahora mismo en Español, si quieres.” (Translated: “Marco, if you want, tell now, now in Spanish, if you want.”)

GOP, Thursday

Trump easily won South Carolina Feb. 20, and Nevada Feb. 23, while Bush dropped out. Christie resurfaced to shock the world Friday by endorsing Trump.

Hosted by Salem Radio’s Hugh Hewitt, Telemundo’s Maria Celeste Arraras and CNN’s Dana Bash and Wolf Blitzer, the 10th GOP debate was held Thursday at the University of Houston. President George H.W. Bush and Barbara Bush were there. I became ever more embarrassed for them.

Trump said he would release his tax returns when his Internal Revenue Service audit was finished. “Nothing prevents individuals from sharing their own tax information,” the IRS said in a statement Friday, responding to an inquiry from The Huffington Post.

Rubio hit Trump for hiring undocumented workers, Trump University and repeating himself, trying out Christie’s smear of him. There were shrieks in the crowd. The vibe soured, growing insane.

“[Rubio is] a choke artist, and [Cruz is] a liar,” said Trump. “Can somebody attack me, please?” said Carson.

Winners: Trump, Rubio, Cruz.

Losers: Kasich, Carson.

Highlight: Trump on former Mexican President Vicente Fox's repudiation: "The wall just got 10 feet taller."

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